

HACKNEY PEOPLE'S PRESS

Hackney's **OTHER** Newspaper

FLATS FREED BY SQUATTERS



THESE HOMES
HAVE BEEN RE-CLAIMED FOR
THE
PENSIONERS OF HACKNEY



Sherry's Wharf is a brand new GLC development, consisting of 143 houses and flats on the edge of the Kingsmead Estate, overlooking Hackney Marshes and the River Lea.

It was occupied at 1.30 am on 1 February, by a group of local tenants and homeless people, supported by the Squat Against Sales Campaign, in protest against the GLC's current housing policies.

Sherry's Wharf was originally designed to include 43 specially-adapted sheltered flats for the elderly, some of which had been promised to pensioners on the Kingsmead Estate. The remaining homes were intended for local tenants on the transfer and waiting lists. A change in GLC housing policy now means that both flats and houses are being let at high rents to vetted tenants, who can satisfy an income qualification of at least five times the rent. Adaptations have been removed from the sheltered flats so that they can be let out on ordinary one-bedroomed flats at rents of £31 per week, beyond the reach of the majority of pensioners. However, certain of the original adaptations remain, for example, electric sockets are at waist level so that an elderly person living there does not need to bend down, and locked bathroom doors can be opened from the outside.

DEMANDS

By the end of the first week of occupation, 60 homeless single people and families were living in Sherry's Wharf, mainly in Offa's Mead and Penda's Mead. With supporters, they have formed themselves into the Sherry's Wharf Action Group, and have two basic demands: that the sheltered accommodation

should be restored and returned to the local pensioners for whom it was intended; and that the rents on the estate should be reduced in line with the rest of Kingsmead Estate, and the income qualification removed. The occupation has a third aim: to draw attention to the worsening problem of homelessness in London. More and more people have nowhere to live.

On Sunday 15 February, Hackney Councillor Gerry Ross officially opened the Sherry's Wharf squat at a street festival attended by about 200 local people and press. Offa's Mead was ceremonially renamed Liberation Square by Cllr Ross, with the apparent sanction of the Post Office, who deliver letters addressed to Liberation Square, Sherry's Wharf! At the festival, entertainment was provided by Smiley the Clown and local young musicians; there was play equipment for children, and local people got the chance to look round the flats and houses which had been intended for them.

Sherry's Wharf Action Group feel that their action is fully justified by the overwhelming support they have already received, particularly from Kingsmead Tenants' Association and the other TAs. They also have the support of Hackney NALGO, ASTMS and UCATT, Hackney Pensioners' Association and the GLC Labour Group, who have passed a resolution to restore the sheltered flat at Sherry's Wharf, should they win the GLC election in May. A deputation to the full Hackney Council meeting on 25 February is to take place, requested by Hackney ratepayers in support of the occupation. Local MP Stanley Clinton Davis and GLC Councillor Ellis Hillman have also given their support. Those in occupation feel that as



the housing crisis deepens and as current government and local authority policies reduce the already inadequate public housing stock still further, it is becoming increasingly obvious that those who cannot afford to buy their own homes or to rent in the private sector have no choice but to take action against housing policies which cannot be changed through the accepted procedures.

The Sherry's Wharf squat is well organised. Immediately after the occupation, a leaflet was distributed round the Kingsmead Estate to explain to tenants why the flats and houses were being squatted. The squatters have also drawn up a charter of basic aims, to be agreed by everyone living there. These include taking care of the flats and houses and of the lawns and pathways on the estate, and respecting the rights and property of fellow squatters. Regular meetings are held, attended by repres-

entatives of all the flats and houses, and organisational tasks are shared out.

The GLC have taken out a possession order against the squatters (and, as it happens, against one of their legal tenants!), to be heard at the High Court after this issue of HPP goes to press. If the possession order is granted, there will be an attempt at eviction soon afterwards, which the squatters plan to resist. Their basic demands have not yet been won.

The Squat Against Sales Campaign (SAS) was formed after the eviction at the beginning of January of Kilner House, a block of GLC-owned flats in South London, which was squatted to prevent the GLC selling them off. The Campaign exists to provide help and support for local people, such as those in Hackney who wish to take this kind of direct action against GLC or local authority housing policies. They can be contacted at 701 5691.

NALGO fighting against cuts

Hackney Council workers won the first round in their battle to defend jobs - and the Council's services - when they picketed the Social Services Committee meeting on Friday 13 February.

The Committee, somewhat to the workers' surprise, voted not to make any drastic cuts in services, save the closure of Hutton Poplars old people's home in Brentwood, which is policy that the local government workers' union, NALGO, agrees with.

Secret

However, this does not mean there will be no cuts in Social Services in 1981-82. The Leader's Panel meeting, held in secret on 24 February (after this issue of HPP goes to press), will almost certainly decide that the Council will make cuts in all services over the next year. Obviously, Social Services cannot expect to be spared when these decisions are made. Then there will be a meeting of the Policy Committee on 4 March, which again will make various proposals - behind closed doors. The final decisions will be taken at the Council's rate-fixing meeting on 25 March. By this time it is likely to be a formality, because all the bargaining will have gone on in secret beforehand.

Picket

NALGO has already called another picket of the Policy Committee meeting on 4 March, and it is possible that Town Hall staff will be on strike for that day.

The Council decisions already taken mean that hard-pressed customers will have to pay more for social services such as meals on wheels next year. There will also be considerably less staff to perform these services, since the vacancy rate will be maintained at 14 per cent. And they are encouraging any staff over 50 to take an early retirement - another way of imposing cuts on an already stretched system.

CHANGING OVER

My recent in-depth research in the wine bars of Lower Clapton, the back streets of Stoke Newington and upstairs at the Trades and Labour Hall in Dalston Lane has led me to the conclusion that there will be no Social Democratic split from the Labour Party in Hackney. By way of contrast from the rest of the country, where every little cough from Limehouse is trumpeted over the front pages of Fleet Street's lesser organs, I can report that in Hackney the usual degree of internecine strife exists between factions.

Before I elaborate, I will have to recap briefly the story so far. Once upon a time, Hackney North Labour Party was the absolute acme of a socialist party, full of starry-eyed zealots who were unanimous in their support of the people's march forward to the Promised Land. In Hackney Central, however, the opposite was true. The progress towards socialism was hindered by a bunch of die-hard, born and bred in the Labour Party old hacks, who were obstructing every move by the young and thrusting to take over the party. (This is of course the totally unbiassed view that you would expect from an impatient starry-eyed zealot like

me.)

The situation is now changed and has become highly fluid and fascinating, at least to me - which is why I'm going to sit here and tell you about it. In Hackney North the old guard is fighting back. In Hackney Central the left is winning battle after battle. The final results of the struggle, for this year at least, will not be known until after those poor sods at HPP have laboured to bring this paper to you, because the General Management Committees' AGMs are just about to be held. Each ward has already elected its delegates to the GMC, and so it is possible,

after some rapid nose-counting to make some predictions.

DISARRAY

First of all, let's look at Hackney North. Here the left is in total disarray. This has meant that the oldies have grabbed back two wards from the left, New River and Springfield. Councillors like Keith Lichman and Patrick Kodikara are thus in grave danger of not getting reselected for the 1982 elections.

According to the national press the left has become ascendant in the Labour Party, and bands of wild Trots are even now sharpening up their axes, preparing to put up the barricades and follow the Great Benn into battle.

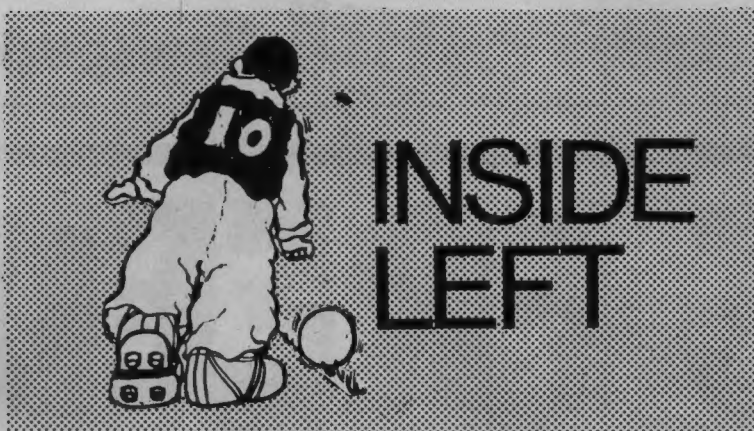
I'm afraid to tell you that in the northern third of the borough at least, this is certainly not the case. A combination of apathy, key people moving and two years of Thatcherism has led to almost total exhaustion.

In Hackney Central, however, the situation is a lot brighter. Readers of this column will know of the problems of Hackney Central from the past. Wards with six people and a dog as the only paid-up members, shady backstage wheeling and dealing, a distinct reluctance to recruit new members - all the things that give a Labour Party a bad name. Now progress is being made. Leabridge ward went left

last year, and this year it has been joined by both East Downs and West Downs. Several well-known figures are no longer delegates to the General Management Committee, including the Owen family, who used to have East Downs in their pockets. Suddenly, however, after the elections at the ward AGM, the retiring Treasurer, Bob Owen, and the Membership Secretary, Matilda Owen, discovered that there were more paid-up members than had been thought - so they were entitled to another GMC delegate, which put Comrade Bob back in his rightful place.

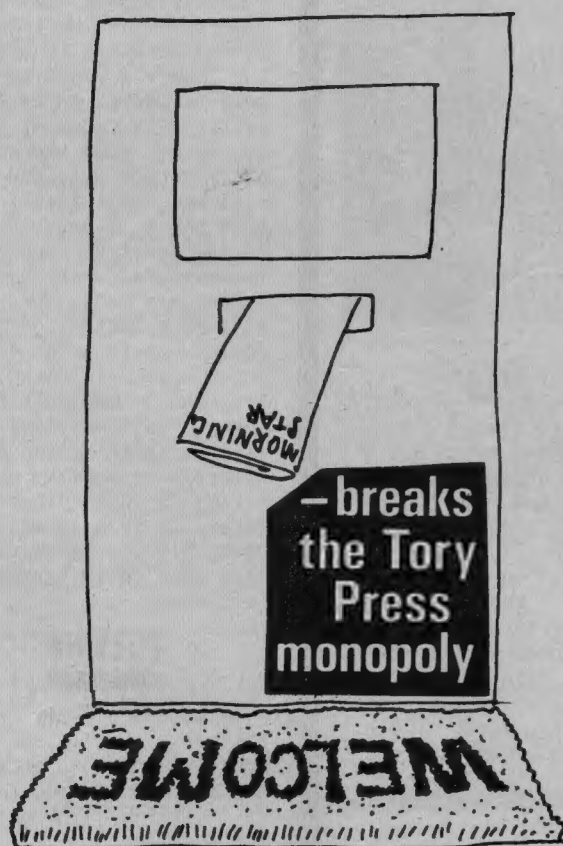
DEADLY

Are all these machinations important, you may well be asking. To the people involved they are of course deadly serious. Their most significant outcome will be on the Council elections in May 1982 since all the candidates will be selected - and the manifesto drawn up - before the next round of AGMs. But when you look at what has happened to the last bunch of councillors elected with good intentions and a manifesto which promised a great deal, you may well agree with the 70 per cent of people in the borough who didn't bother to vote.



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Plots thicken

After long negotiations and a lot of waiting, there is now a Hackney Allotment Society in existence. The aim of the society is to campaign for and then administer plots of land for use as allotments.

Hackney Borough Council has made two sites available so far and more are in the pipeline. Other bodies are being approached, including the GLC, British Rail and North Thames Gas.

Some of the sites will be for relatively short-term use, perhaps about five years. Anyone wishing to join the Allotment Society, or wanting more information, should write to:

Joyce Berry,
50 Alconbury Rd,
Hackney E5.



for Hackney
People's Press
hope you are all
as well as
us
LETTERS

THANKS FROM CHILDREN'S CENTRE

Dear Hackney People's Press:

On 18 February the Labour Party policy meeting decided to recommend to Labour group meeting on the 23rd (and therefore full council meeting on the 25th) that 165 Sandringham Road, E8, be let to Dalston Children's Centre for use as a children's house. At a rent of £2,000 pa, to be paid by further partnership funding; as agreed at officers' meeting on 19 February.

Instructions to relevant committee directors are to seek out the sources of finance, including possible ILEA funding, to renovate the property at a minimum 1980 estimation of £23,000.

Dalston Children's Centre sincerely hopes that there will not be any further delays during various formalities with Housing Development and Finance committees and the Department of the Environment, leading up to the tenancy agreement.

Dalston Children's Centre would also like to see the Council honour its original commitment of 18 months ago to renovate and repair the premises for the children's house, by meeting the cost of structural works necessary for 165 Sandringham Road - presumably the reason why the shop has been vacant for five years.

Dalston Children's Centre would like to thank all those councillors and council officers who have worked hard to find and secure premises for the children's house during the past 18 months, and those councillors and officers who supported the recommendations of 18 February and 19 February 1981.

Yours sincerely
Dalston Children's Centre
9a Sandringham Road,
E8.

Marshes still at risk

The threat of permanent defacement and the loss of a local beauty spot, is still looming large over Walthamstow Marshes.

After months of wrangling the date for the public inquiry over gravel extraction has still not been fixed, and the Lea Valley Regional Park Authority solicitors have asked for it to be postponed until the early summer.

Meanwhile the Park Authority have sought to bypass the GLC Gravel Committee by submitting an application to Waltham Forest Council for outline permission to make the North Marsh into a sailing lake. This would destroy the unique ecology of the Marshes in exactly the same way as gravel extraction would.

GRAVEL GAMBIT

This rather curious gambit has various ramifications. For example:

- If granted it would prevent anyone at the public inquiry over gravel extraction from the Marshes from objecting to the afteruse of the proposed pits.

- It would be impossible to create such a lake without extracting gravel. The Park Authority has already been refused permission to extract gravel.

- The letter accompanying the application states that the Regional Park Authority (RPA)



want to establish the principle that the area can be used for sailing as in the original masterplan.

Ironically, the RPA is considering in secret a proposal to move the Hackney Dog Stadium to Leyton Marshes, a scheme definitely not in the masterplan, and which would mean yet more loss of open space.

Even if these applications are defeated, the Save the Marshes Campaign will not rest until the RPA recognises that Walthamstow Marshes must be protected for the benefit of the whole community.

The Save the Marshes Campaign needs your help and support, in terms of both time and money. Hackney Law

Centre is providing free legal advice, but a barrister for the inquiry will have to be paid.

At the moment the Campaign is involved in an exhibition about the Marshes. It is taking place at the Vestry House Museum in Walthamstow, and commences on Saturday 14 March. The exhibition will

concentrate on the history and ecology of the Marshes and will include old maps, photos, plant specimens, as well as children's work from local schools and information about the Campaign. The exhibition will be situated in the Vestry House Museum for about five weeks and then will tour the Waltham Forest libraries. The Campaign is anxious for as many people as possible to visit the exhibition and hopes that local teachers will take their pupils along, as one of the Campaign's strongest arguments is the educational value of the Marshes, both actual and potential.

LETTERS CAMPAIGN

The other thing the public can do is to put forward objections to the sailing lake plan. Letters should be addressed to:

Mr. Cadenhead,
Planning & Engineering,
Municipal Offices,
The Ridgeway,
LONDON E4.

Campaign meetings are fortnightly on Wednesdays. The next meetings are on 18 March, 1st & 15 April. They are held at: 35 Spring Hill, E5, at 8 pm. For more information about the Campaign contact:

Jane Nash,
93 Mayola Rd,
Hackney E5.
(tel. 986 1765)

NOTT DECLARES WAR ON CND

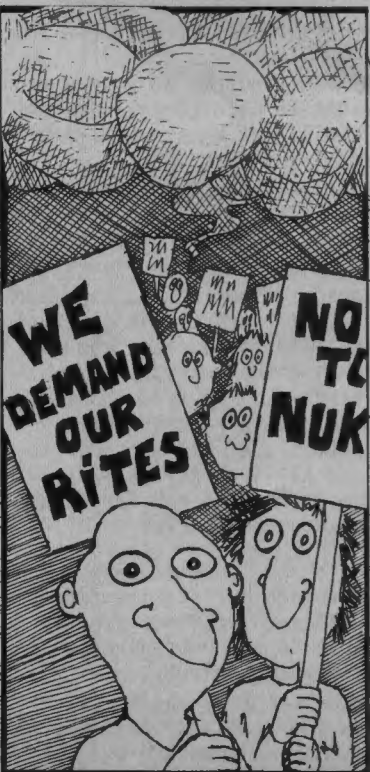
Last week it was announced that the new Defence Minister, John Nott, has decided to launch a prolonged attack against the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. In Nott's efforts to promote nuclear weapons for Britain, the government will attempt to justify the purchase of four Trident anti-ballistic nuclear submarines, costing £5,180 million and the placing of 160 Cruise missiles on British soil.

This so-called "public relations" stunt, which the taxpayer is stumping up for, is designed to convince people that a nuclear deterrent is necessary to maintain world peace, and that we should start living with the idea that nuclear war is inevitable.

There is no logic whatsoever in their thinking. There is no such thing as a nuclear deterrent. With the week-by-week build-up of nuclear weapons in the world, and the increase in world tensions, it is only a matter of time before a nuclear missile is launched. It could be a deliberate attack or it could be through human error. Whatever the reason, there will be no calling a missile back once it has been launched.

In Britain we are in the midst of a serious social and economic crisis, which is not getting any better, and the government still persists in seeing Britain as a leading world military power. We are being forced to compete in a nuclear arms race that can

only end up in wringing our resources dry and then destroying us. The government is pumping millions of pounds of our money into a nuclear defence system which is no defence at all, but an invitation to nuclear attack. When will we wake up and see that we are being used by the Americans and NATO who are selling us the Cruise missiles and Trident for millions of pounds and then using this country as a giant aircraft carrier and launch pad for the missiles



that they've just sold us plus making us a sitting duck for a nuclear attack? It's high time our energy and money were channelled into finding ways to un-snare ourselves and Europe from the deadly trap created by the real superpowers.

An alternative to this downward spiraling nuclear arms race is to join Hackney Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. HCND is trying to raise the awareness of people in Hackney about nuclear disarmament issues and encouraging active support for the campaign. At the moment there are just over 200 members in HCND which has just been revived over the past six months. But now in the face of the present government's campaign to counteract the work we've been doing, it is becoming even more vital that we recruit 200 new members every week. Time is running out until the day in 1983 when the Cruise missiles are due to arrive in Britain. We've had our best successes getting members at the free showings of the documentary-style film, The War Game, which was banned by the BBC. This film graphically shows the terrible reality of what would happen in Britain during and after a nuclear attack. But please don't wait to see this film in order to join. We need your support now. (There is also a newly-formed Young CND, which all young people are encouraged to join now.)

WEA CLASSES

NEW PROGRAMME

For almost a decade the Hackney branch of the Workers' Educational Association has run classes that have tended to become models for other branches throughout the country. Hackney had classes on microchips before most people knew the difference from fish and chips!

What is the secret of its vigour and originality? All classes are suggested, planned and organised by the people who want them. Hackney is first and foremost a democratic branch, working closely with groups and individuals in the borough who can use its facilities. A fortnightly Writers' Workshop runs in conjunction with Centerprise Publishing Project (a new one may be starting at Chats Palace). "Women Today", a weekly class, is run from Hoxton

Hall. A very successful course on Films in the Third Reich was suggested and run by the tutor; a class on The Fen in the City by the Save the Marshes Campaign; Health and Safety At Work, in co-operative with local trades unions; a day school on local government finance with Hackney Adult Education Institute...the list is endless.

The Hackney branch is now planning its 1981/2 programme. If you or your group have suggestions for classes, why not bring them to the next branch meeting on Thursday 26 March at 8 pm, in Centerprise, 136 Kingsland High Street, or send written suggestions to the Branch Secretary, 76 Carysfort Road, N16.

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Hackney TENANT

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HACKNEY OFF WORK

Over one person in ten in Hackney is out of work. Every week, the number increases. Redundancies at Lesney's Metal Box and at the Council; devastation in the clothing industry. The final death agonies of the footwear and furniture trades are resounding, and workers in Hackney are suffering. Throughout the nation, efforts big and small are being made to save jobs, create new ones and to change government policies to create employment.

A big new initiative has been taken by the Regional Councils of the TUC in the North West, Midlands and South East. On May Day this year, The People's March For Jobs will leave Liverpool on its way to London. Sponsored by MPs, trades unions, community organisations, blessed by the Bishop of Birmingham, fed and accommodated by sympathetic councils, local organisations and individuals, the marchers are trying to stir the nation into action for jobs.

The march will reach London on May 29. On May 30, there will be a rally at QPR's football ground and on the Sunday a giant demonstration and carnival will hit the headlines - and the government.

The miners have just shown that action saves jobs and stops the Tories. There are no working miners in Hackney - but there are many workers and would-be workers. This march is an opportunity for us to link up with other deprived working-class districts and force change.

On Monday 16 March at 7.45 in the Homerton Library, Homerton High Street, building workers' leader Pete Carter, organiser of the Midlands section of the march, will be speaking on how we can make the march a big success. Bring your socks and songs, cash and commitment and we will overcome!

Trades Council AGM

Thursday 5 February saw the Trades Hall taken over by delegates to the Trades Council Annual General Meeting. The Hall was so packed that some of the 80 or more delegates weren't able to get in and had to wait for the pearls of wisdom to float into the corridor.

The results of the election of the officers were as follows: Chair: Tommy Douras, 39 votes; Tony Morley, 23; Secretary: Dermot McNeill, 39 votes; Colin Patience, 19; Vice Chair: Danny Silver, 33 votes; Mike Colley, 23; Assistant Secretary: Colin Middleton, 34 votes; Malcolm Day, 23; Treasurer: Dave Davis was elected unopposed.

The only change from last year was for Chairperson. Tommy Douras beat the incumbent Tony Morley. The results were a clean sweep for the Communist Party slate (not all CP members) over the left caucus. It may be noted that all the candidates, let alone those elected, were white and male.

Worse Than 1933

Unemployment in Hackney is still soaring, according to figures released by the Council. The January figures stand at 10,368 - the highest number of unemployed people in the borough since 1936.

Taking a more recent comparison, the present number of jobless in Hackney has risen by nearly 6,000 - or 123 per cent. - since the present government took office. The adult male unemployment rate is now officially 12.5% in the Hackney and Shoreditch employment exchange areas.

The Council point out that these figures indicate a deteriorating employment situation in the Borough which "obscures the critical situation for groups such as construction workers, ethnic minorities and school leavers."

430 for one

The present recession is certainly a depressing prospect for school leavers, as they have virtually no experience to offer prospective employers. In the Central Hackney area 430 young people are chasing one job and, although Thatcher denies that the present situation bears any resemblance to the 1930's, in the borough as a whole it is three times more difficult for those leaving school to get work than at the height of the depression in 1933.

small firms hit

The latest CBI predictions bode even more ill for Hackney as they concede that the decline will hit small firms the hardest - and it is these small, struggling businesses that make up the bulk of the local industry.

In their annual addresses both the Chairperson and the Secretary reaffirmed their total opposition to the policy of using unemployment to restore the profits of capitalists.

This policy works by forcing workers to choose between cuts in wages and unemployment. At the same time the owners of capital are free to move to areas like South East Asia, where they can be assured of cheap and docile workers and a stable economy, maintained by puppet dictators.

This year should witness an intensification of the fightback in Hackney. The Trades Council support unit and the unemployed centre, also set up by the Trades Council, will act as focal points for both employed and unemployed workers. The areas of action will be fighting redundancies and cuts in services. They need every support they can get.

NATION ON THE DOLE

THE DOLE CAN SERIOUSLY DAMAGE YOUR HEALTH

Scientists have recently discovered that unemployment can seriously damage your health. These facts were revealed in a recent issue of World Medicine, a magazine for doctors and pharmaceutical companies. It reported that there is a direct link between rising unemployment and an increase in cases of mental illness, and that unemployed people suffer anxiety, guilt and hostility. It also showed that the number of suicides and admissions to mental hospitals in this country has grown dramatically over the past year, all because of the present economic recession.

You don't need a psychology degree to realise that being without a job and trying to make ends meet on the pittance you get from the dole is bound to make people depressed and angry. But in-

stead of dealing with the real cause of the problem - unemployment - it's the unemployed themselves who are defined as having "psychophysiological" problems. They are classed as depressive or neurotic and given a dose of Valium to keep them docile or, if they are lucky, offered counselling and "relaxation training".

The research itself comes up with some very important and quite startling facts. One survey found that a sustained rise in unemployment would lead up to a virtual epidemic of mental illness and suicides. It was predicted that over five years as many as 50,000 suicides could be attributed to psychological problems of being out of work. It was also discovered that the people most vulnerable to these problems were women.

JOB CENT



Not surprisingly, as it is women who are the first to suffer their loss of dignity by being forced out of work and back into the home.

The real solution to these problems is not to condition people to accept unemployment by undergoing dubious treatment, but to change the government's economic policies. This was emphasised at a recent MIND (National Association for Mental Health) conference, when a principal officer for the Strathclyde Regional Social Work Department pointed out that one effect of handing out tranquillisers to those on the dole could be to dampen down healthy and justified anger.

Black Peoples Day

Statement by Black Youth Movement

The Deao; Peter Campbell (18); Lloyd Hall (20); Lillian Henry (16); Andrew Gooding (14); Glen Powell (15); Gerry Francis (17); Steve Collins (17); Owen Thompson (16); Patrick Cummins (16); Humphry Brown (15); Patricia Johnson (15); Yvonne Ruddock (16); Paul Ruddock (22).

As a result of a deliberate fire attack on a birthday party on 18th January, 1981, 13 black teenagers died and 26 were injured.

what happened

On Saturday 17th January, Yvonne Ruddock and Angela Jackson held a joint birthday party. The first time a party was held at 439 New Cross Road the Ruddock's home. The party was for friends and family. Yvonne's mother and other party goers told us that all the young people at the party were between the ages of 11 and 19.

● When the party was in its height there were around 145 young people. There were five adults including Mrs Ruddock in the kitchen downstairs. It was a peaceful party with no fights or trouble. A few uninvited guests tried to gain entrance. They were turned away without any trouble. The police called on two occasions and asked for the sound to be turned down and a window closed. Between 3 and 3.30 am most people had left the party. The remaining were waiting around for the first train or bus.

While the adults were in the kitchen Mrs Ruddock asked Leslie Morrison, her cousin, to make sure "the children weren't getting up to anything". Leslie went to check the living room, Mrs Ruddock's best room, to make sure none of the young people were in there. When he opened the door he discovered the fire and raised the alarm. Within five to ten minutes the

whole building was alight. The roof was completely burnt off within 20 minutes.

Most people were trapped on the second and third floors. The only escape for some was jumping from the third floor onto concrete below. Some were severely injured or killed. Others were burnt to death. Thirteen are now dead and 26 are injured.

history of attack

There is a history of attacks on black people and their premises in the Lewisham, New Cross and Deptford areas. The most well-known are the Sunderland Rd bombing - were ten members of a black family were seriously injured - and the burning of the old Moonshot Youth Club only half a mile away from the Ruddock's home. No arrests have been made in connection with these attacks.

our position

We in the Black Youth Movement see the fire at the Ruddock's home as another murderous attack on black people.

As young blacks we have a right to hold our parties and we will not be stopped from holding them.

The attack on Yvonne and Angela's party is an attack against us holding parties in our own way.

Sound systems and parties are part of black people's culture and life style. It's the way in which we entertain ourselves.

We have a right to hold parties and will continue to hold parties. For us to do this we must never forget the New Cross Massacre.

We must:

- Protect our parties from inside and outside by being alert to any unusual or suspicious behaviour;
- collect information on anti-black groups and individuals so that we know who our

enemies are;

● find out all the details we can about anti-black groups or individuals when they come to give out their propaganda at our schools and colleges;

● find out who in our classrooms belong to anti-black organisations, for example the National Front, British Movement and Column 88.

what has been done

The New Cross Massacre Action Committee was formed on Tuesday 20 January. The Committee is made up of different black organisations. At its first meeting, the following things were done:

A fact finding commission was set up to collect our own information from party-goers and witnesses because we cannot depend on the police. The New Cross Fire Fund was set up to raise money to help the families to bury their dead; to help Mrs Ruddock who lost her home and possessions; and to help those injured.

On Sunday 25 January a meeting of over 1,500 people was held. This meeting informed the people of the true facts of the fire.

At a meeting of the New Cross Massacre Action Committee with over 300 black people present, it was decided that a New Cross Massacre - BLACK PEOPLE'S DAY OF ACTION would be held on Monday 2 March. People will assemble at 10 am at Fordham Park, next to Moonshot Community Centre, Pagnell St, London SE14. We will be marching from 439 New Cross Rd, to:

Fleet Street - where most newspapers are printed - they have misreported the facts of the massacre to try and confuse us.

Scotland Yard - we do not trust their investigations. Houses of Parliament - the massacre has not been mentioned, not even by the local MP, John Silkin.

10 Downing Street - Mrs Thatcher has said nothing.

COME WHAT MAY WE ARE HERE TO STAY

If you want to make a donation to the New Cross Fire Fund, send cheques to: The New Cross Fire Fund, bank account No. 91340565, Barclays Bank, 5a Marylebone High St, London W1.

BLACK PEOPLE

RELIGION CAN SERIOUSLY DAMAGE YOUR

HEALTH

Could a Black person's religion drastically influence her treatment in custody, or even opinions of her sanity? Three recent cases provide distressing evidence that prison psychiatrists are, in fact, diagnosing Black men and women's religious beliefs as "schizophrenia".

Abbena Simba Tola, a young Black Rastafarian woman, was released in September from Holloway Prison. During her sentence she spent months in solitary confinement and on the psychiatric wing because of her uncompromising and continuous demands for Black reading material and for respect and recognition of her Black culture and religion.

Largactil

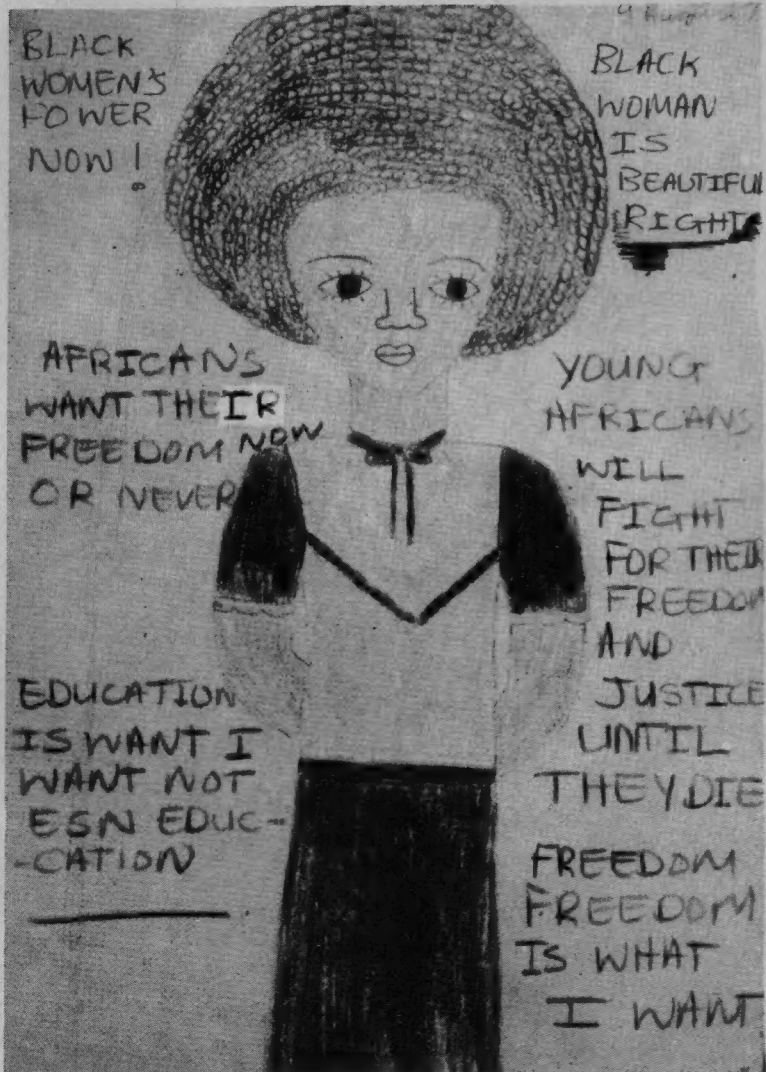
Abbena was pressed to take psychotropic drugs like Largactil and when she refused was forcibly injected with Depixol. Largactil is used when psychiatrists believe someone has "lost contact with reality". In Russia they use it on political dissidents. In mental hospitals it is also used to calm aggressive and hostile patients and render them "more co-operative and amenable to suggestion". Depixol is the same kind of drug, but one cannot avoid taking it... it is injected into the backside and carries on working inside the body for two to four weeks. Both drugs can have terrifying side effects.

"If a Black woman goes to prison," Abbena says, "she doesn't just face fighting for working class, prisoners' and women's rights - she faces racialism." She was told once in prison that "Black people don't write books because they want to do athletics and sing and stuff like that." She fought hard to get Black newspapers and magazines into the prison library, but was told by a prison psychiatrist that she must be mad...because she continued to fight, even knowing she wouldn't get anywhere.

rebellious

"Labelled a 'behavioural problem', she says, 'I'm someone who's rebelling against the system, who continues and continues to open their mouth loudly so everyone can hear. The more as a Black militant and woman I keep on saying things, the more people will have to listen.' Her autobiography is to be published by the prisoners' union, PROP, (97 Caledonian Road, NI), and she will be speaking at Centreprise on Saturday 7 March (see What's On, p6).

Steven Thompson is a 26-year-old Rastafarian who was sent to Rampton Mental Hospital in December, one week before he was due to be released from a six-year



Drawing by Abbena Simba Tola

prison sentence. Under Section 72 of the 1959 Mental Health Act, he will be held there until the Home Secretary says he can be released - which means he could be there for the rest of his life!

Steven's mother, Mrs Mavis Thompson, says: "They said that Steve was a schizophrenic. But he's not. He's a Rastafarian. When he talks about religion, they think he's mad."

A Rampton psychiatrist, Dr Ian Pickering, has said that he cannot see any reason why Steven should be held there, but Steven has written poems about his religious beliefs and the Home Office is said to believe that some of these "indicate a schizophrenic condition".

humour

Richard Campbell (see HPP December) was called "Cartoon" by his mates because of his sense of humour. Last March he was sent to Ashford Remand Centre. Twenty-two days later he was found dead in his cell. A preliminary inquest attributed his death to dehydration resulting from schizophrenia (he had been on a hunger strike). Doctors talked about his "ramblings about Jah, about going to Africa, and helping the poor". They don't appear to have recognised these as Rastafarian beliefs. Like

Abbena, Richard was given Largactil and Depixol. Deaths from these drugs are (statistically) rare, but in 1974 two injections of Depixol given on the same day killed a physically healthy student, and so in Richard's dehydrated condition, the drugs may well have contributed to his death.

normal

Whilst in Ashford, Richard was sent to a local mental hospital for examination. There Dr Drone Greedharry found him "mentally normal, speaking rationally and making perfectly good sense". He stressed, however, Richard's need for physical treatment due to the hunger strike.

At a second inquest a jury refused to describe Richard as "schizophrenic", and wanted to return a verdict of death due to the negligence of the authorities, but were not allowed to. To mark the anniversary of Richard's death, there will be a march on the Home Office on Tuesday 31 March (leaving Tooting Broadway at 1 pm.) The march is organised by the Friends of Richard Campbell Committee, 135a Lavender Hill, London SW11. Lee Campbell, Richard's uncle, and one of his friends will be speaking at Centreprise with Abbena on Saturday 7 March. Full details of this meeting can be obtained from the Matthew O'Hara Committee, 177 Glenarm Road, E5 ONB.

TORMENTED BY RACIST THUGS

Jarnail Singh lives with his wife and five small children in a house belonging to Hackney Council which is in an exposed position near some open ground. They have lived there fairly happily for several years, although the property was never in very good order.

Recently this family received a number of telephoned threats from racist thugs, which added to the ongoing harassment of Mrs Singh and the children when travelling to and from school - as a result of which the children's attendance at school had been erratic. These threats culminated in a partially successful attempt to set fire to the family's home. Fortunately they were out at the time, spending the evening with relatives, and had decided to stay overnight.

smoke dust

After the fire, the family was unable to return to its home, as wiring had become unsafe and windows had shattered. The whole place was - and still is - covered with smoke dust. The borough Homeless Families Section did not provide them with alternative accommodation, and they moved in temporarily with relatives. The Council refused to consider alternatives, apparently having nothing to offer of suitable size. The house was made safe and windproof - just about - and the family was obliged to move back.

Since this time the family has received more threats and promises "to do a better job next time" from the racists. They have all been sleeping together in one room with one parent and the other is staying awake all night to keep guard. They have now been joined overnight by a rota of people arranged through the Hackney Asian Association (HAA) and the East London Workers Against Racism (ELWAR).

As several councillors, one the chairman of HAA, failed to make any progress with the housing department, a mass lobby of the January Council meeting was organised - during

which an adjournment was called as the meeting had effectively been brought to a halt by Mrs Dharumal Harcharan Singh, who teaches in the same school the Singh children attend.

She walked to the middle of the Council chamber and refused to move until something was resolved. After the adjournment, a special meeting between Mr Singh and the housing chiefs was agreed on, to take place after the Council meeting. That meeting was a disaster, as Mr Singh was not able to be accompanied by representatives of HAA, and it broke up in confusion. The deputy leader promised, personally, to deal with the case the following morning. A satisfactory offer of alternative accommodation was, in fact, now been made, and as HPP goes to press, there are signs that the Singh family will accept this offer.

There have been many views on the wisdom or otherwise of treating the Singh case in this way. However, experience with Hackney Council has been that the housing department is most reluctant to accept racial harassment as a reason for transfer. Last year a West Indian family was transferred after a two-year fight, during which the father lost his job from taking time off to protect his home and family and through which the family lived in an atmosphere of strain and personal danger.

harassment

There are many, many cases of racial harassment in this borough, and it is important that we make sure people do not have to capitulate to them and that families in this position get the protection they need. However, when this is not the case, the housing department would do better to recognise this fast and do something quickly. The only conclusion that can be drawn is that Hackney Housing Department is rather less than sympathetic to the stress under which some of Hackney's families are having to live.

ADVERTISEMENTS

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WHATS ON March

THEATRE

LITTLE ANGEL MARIONETTE THEATRE
14 Dagmar Passage, Cross St, N1.
(Book by telephone on 226 1787)

* March 3, 4 & 5:
Theatre du Petit Mirroir, a performance of Chinese glove puppets. This is an authentic Chinese glove-puppet theatre with original antique puppets depicting Chinese mythologies. The puppets are highly refined and articulate, representing, with original costumes, Chinese opera characters.

The show is suitable for both adults and children over 12 years, although they will be in London for three days only.

The play is 'The Siege of the Heavenly Palace', adapted from a 16th Century Chinese novel.

Perfs: 7.30 pm.
March 3 & 5 in French;
March 4 in original Chinese.

* Sats & Suns till 22 March:
'Cupid and Psyche'
This dramatisation from Robert Graves' version of 'The Golden Ass' employs a number of extraordinary theatrical devices to present a 'gripping drama of love, jealousy and intrigue amongst Gods and Mortals'. Not suitable for children under 6 years.

Perfs: 3pm Sats & Suns.
Admission: £1.75 Adults;
£1.25 Children.

* Saturday Matinees:
'Wonder Island'
A special show for the very young (3-5 yr olds), 'Wonder Island' recounts the hair-raising adventure of Percy and Mr. Ninepence when they accidentally land on this mysterious island.
Perfs: 11am.
Admission: £1.25 Adults;
£1.00 Children.



* Spring Season:
Hans Andersen's 'The Little Mermaid' followed by the London Puppet players with 'The Trojan Donkey'.

BOOK BY PHONE
01-226 1787

HOXTON HALL
128a Hoxton St, N1.

Sat 28 & Sun 29 March:
Multi-Media Weekend Workshop. A chance for people to expand their understanding and perception of this art form, it will explore techniques in theatre, video, sound and visuals.

Cost: £3. Check with Hoxton Hall for details.

For information about plays and other events at Hoxton Hall Theatre during March, see the ad. on page 7.

THEATRE ROYAL, STRATFORD EAST
Gerry Raffles Square, E15.

March Programme

Sun 1: SIOBHAN DAVIES AND DANCERS. Siobhan Davies, leading dancer and choreographer with the London Contemporary Dance Theatre, has created a new group of seven dancers who are presenting a preview performance at the Theatre Royal for one night only.

Sun 8: ROYAL CABARET. Songs, sketches, dances - in fact, absolutely anything is billed at the Theatre Royal cabaret.

Wed 11: 'I, GISELLE'
What happens when a feminist dancer leaps into a classical ballet? Jackie Lansley and Fergus Early direct, choreograph and perform in a work which radically reinterprets the popular romantic ballet 'Giselle'.

Thu 12 & Fri 13 in the Square Thing Studio Theatre: Les Oeufs Malades present 'THE FAMILY ALBUM'.

Sun 15: THE MAGIC SHOW
The London Society of Magicians celebrate their 40th anniversary with a day of magic tricks in The Square Thing Studio Theatre, followed by an evening show in the main theatre presenting many of their most talented magicians and celebrities.
16-21 (Mon to Sat): 7:04 Theatre Company Scotland present: 'BLOOD RED ROSES' by John McGrath.

For times of performances, ticket prices and further information, contact: Gill Ward at the Theatre Royal, phone 534 7374 or 534 2178.

MUSIC

HACKNEY MUSICIANS COLLECTIVE
Bands in the collective play every Monday night at the Earl of Aberdeen pub (corner of Grove Rd & Roman Rd), Bethnal Green, E2, from 8pm till midnight. Entrance: 50p.

The collective have also just released an album featuring most of the bands. They will be selling it at all their gigs.

The Collective bands also play quite often at Chats Palace, 42-44 Brooksby's Walk, E9. The Collective can be contacted at: 86 Holmleigh Road, N16, or through Venita at Chats Palace, phone 986 6714.

CROWN & CASTLE

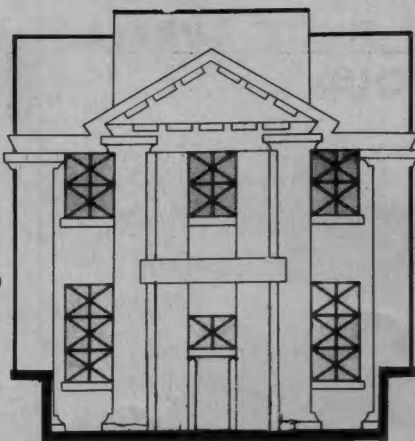
Dalston Junction, E8
(254 3678)

The Meeting Place folk club has Irish folk music every Fri, Sat & Sun evenings. Resident band Cara. Plus surprise guests.

8.30 - 11.00 pm. Free

THE PEGASUS 109 Green Lanes, N16 (226 5930)

Music every night of the week, including resident jazz/rock bands. Big Chief plays every Sat. night, Alternative Cabaret every other Sunday night. Check with the Pegasus for music on other nights. Admission (unless otherwise stated): £1.



CHATS PALACE 42-44 Brooksby's Walk, E9.
(tel. 986 6714)

Events at Chats in March

Thu 5: Modern Jazz night. 8pm.

Fri 6: Benefit for Chats Palace with Poison Girls & the Managing Directors. 8pm. Adm.: £1.50

Sat 7: Mr. George Binmore's Celebrated Music Hall, featuring Christine Pilgrim. 8pm. Adm: £1.50 (OAP's and children - 75p)

Sun 8: Lunchtime jazz with Graham Read's Futuristic Rhythm. 12 noon.

Sun 8: Mr. George Binmore's Celebrated Music Hall. 8pm Adm: £1.50 (OAP's and children - 75p)

Thu 12: Modern jazz night. 8pm Adm: £1.00

Fri 13: Hackney Musicians' Collective present Popular History of Signs plus Two V. Finland Station.

Sat 14: 'The Family Album' by Bryony Lavery, presented by Les Oeufs Malades Theatre Company.

8pm. Tickets: £1.20 OAP's 60p

Sun 15: Lunchtime mainstream jazz. Adm: 50p. (Accompanied kids - free.)

For details of the rest of Chats' programme of events, phone 986 6714.

CINEMA

KONAK CINEMA 11 Stoke Newington Rd (254 3415)

March Programme

Each programme runs for 7 days.

* **Sun 1:** PRIVATE BENJAMIN

* **Sun 8:** ENTER THE DRAGON & THE DRAGON LEAVES

* **Sun 15:** AIRPLANE & FOUL PLAY

* **Sun 22:** THE MIRROR CRACK'D

* **Sun 29:** STIR CRAZY

Tickets: £1.70 Adults;

£1.00 Children

For times of programmes, phone the Box Office.

RIO CINEMA 107 Kingsland High St, E8. (254 6677)

For details of this month's programme, see the Rio ad.

MEETINGS

SAVE THE MARSHES CAMPAIGN

Public meetings are held fortnightly on Wednesdays. The next meetings are on: 18 March, 1st April. At: 35 Spring Hill, E5, 8pm. The Campaign is also holding an exhibition about the Walthamstow Marshes, including old maps, photos and children's work, on the

ecology and history of the Marshes. The exhibition is to be held in the Vestry House Museum, Walthamstow, from Saturday 14 March, for about five weeks. It will then go on a tour of local libraries in Walthamstow. For further information about the Campaign, contact: Jane Nash, 93 Mayola Rd, E5. (tel. 986 1765)

HACKNEY HEALTH CAMPAIGN

- meets on the second Tuesday of the month to discuss issues affecting the local health service. Everyone welcome. 7.30 pm at Shore-ditch Health Centre, 210 Kingsland Rd, E2.

HACKNEY FIGHTBACK

Meets on the first Monday of every month. The meetings are open to affiliated groups, to discuss strategy for fighting cuts in local services. 8pm at the Labour & Trades Club, 96 Dalston Lane, E8.

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HACKNEY'S 16th ANNUAL ARTS & CRAFTS EXHIBITION

March 17 to 23

Hackney Town Hall

AN EXHIBITION BY THE PEOPLE FOR THE PEOPLE

Closing date for entries: MARCH 7

Details from Arts Section (739 7600) and LIBRARIES & INFORMATION BUREAUX

NEW CROSS MASSACRE ACTION COMMITTEE

Monday 2 March: Black People's Day of Action. The Day of Action has been called to demonstrate about the New Cross fire in which 12 black people were killed and 27 injured and to protest about the fact that the authorities have done virtually nothing about it. Assemble 10 am at Fordham Park (next to Moonshot Community Centre), Pagnell St, London SE14. Demonstration moves from 439 New Cross Rd to Fleet St, Scotland Yard, Houses of Parliament and 10 Downing St, ending in Hyde Park.



For details of a range of



7 Parkholme Rd, London E.8
Or phone 249 9938 for appointment

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OTHER EVENTS

HACKNEY WORKERS' EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION (WEA)

Hackney WEA will be holding a Day School on Sat 7 March on 'Prison Psychiatry'.

Topics include: 'The Rastafarians: Richard 'Cartoon' Campbell & Abenna Simba Tola'; 'Racial Discrimination or Medicine?'; 'Prisons or Mental Hospitals'; 'Women and Broadmoor'; 'The Psychiatric and Anti-psychiatric View'.

10.00 am - 4.30 pm at Centerprise, 136 Kingsland High St, E8.

Programme details from: 177 Glenarm Road, E5. Stamp appreciated.

There is also a demonstration organised by the Friends of Richard Campbell Committee which is to take place on: Tuesday 31 March assembling at Tooting Broadway at 1pm.

HACKNEY ADULT EDUCATION INSTITUTE

Saturday 21 March: Day School on: Self Defence For Women, at Upton Ho. Karate tutor, Dr. Michael Lytton, has agreed to put on a special one-day course to teach women the basic forms of self-defence.

The fee, which includes lunch, is £2.25. Enrolment is expected to be heavy, so applicants should register as soon as possible at your nearest branch office.

Names of interested men will be taken for use in the event of cancellations occurring.

Timetable: 10.30 am - 12.30pm; 1.30 - 4.30 pm.

For further details, phone Hackney AEI on 985 9646.

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SHIATSU

Beginners' Shiatsu class starts Monday 9 March for ten weeks. Classes are from 7-10 pm. £25 fee.

Apply to:

Merle Gering,
1 Cazenove Rd,
LONDON N16.

Tel. 435 8751 or 806 0713

AHA UNDERSPEND

As the end of the financial year approaches and public spending budgets are about to be renewed, it is becoming apparent that many Area Health Authorities (AHAs) have underspent by hundreds of thousands of pounds. The City & East London AHA, which covers the Hackney health district, is no exception.

It is interesting to discover that, in these times of cuts and shortages of money, the District Management Team in City & Hackney Health District, have failed to spend £86,000 allocated to the community services. It has been said that this underspending is due solely because no-one is willing to apply for jobs as nurses and health visitors in Hackney.

LOW WAGES

How could anyone be so blind, is the cry heard from the Administration, not to want to work in Hackney? A lack of enthusiasm by nurses to work in

this district may well be something to do with the fact that the Administration (in the guise of the District Treasurer) refuses to pay district nurses the same wages as those in the surrounding boroughs. Nurses in Hackney are required to pay for the cleaning of their own uniforms (which they are forced to wear) and have no car allowance — although the cars are used on nursing duties, and it would be difficult to perform these duties without this form of transport.

IRRITATION

These expenses add up to substantial sums every year. On top of this there is a certain irritation within the nursing profession at the amount of quibbling about how to pay nurses as little as possible. Health visitors were recently instructed by a Senior Nursing Officer that if they made fewer home visits they would be paid less. Never mind the quality — feel

the width — or how many surgeons would like to be paid according to how fast they worked (and how many of us would like to be their patients)?

SAVINGS?

Cynics in the district community health service might suspect that the Treasurer is happy that the district nurses are dreadfully understaffed, because the money saved in this area can be used up elsewhere where there is a shortage. Some have suggested that the money might be used to beef up the home help service, which has been cut so much as to be almost useless, and has no 'shortage' of recruits.

The District Treasurer should know all about saving public money — he has his own flat at Bart's hospital.

ETHNIC HEALTH

City and Hackney Community Health Council and Hackney Council for Racial Equality were very aware of the particular difficulties non-English speaking women had in using the health service. They were also conscious of multiple health problems women had who came from poor areas, lived in poverty and illness-creating environments, with little knowledge about how to make the most appropriate use of the services and the services' lack of understanding of their needs.

For these reasons, we applied to the Inner City Partnership through the AHA to fund two community health workers who would work as

advocates and health educators among non-English speaking women.

This application for funds was successful and we have appointed Hafize Ece to work with Turkish-speaking women and Zohra Ali Zubair to work with Urdu and Gujarati-speaking women.

Hafize trained as a nurse in Turkey and has a small baby of her own. Zohra has a wealth of experiential knowledge gained through caring for her own six children.

Zohra and Hafize both live in the community and are enthusiastic about taking on their job. They will both work part time.

Initially they will work

with pregnant and nursing mothers who are attending the Mothers' Hospital. Their major task will be to help to put across key information on nutrition, feeding practices, health care, and helping women understand their own bodies, in a way that takes account of culture and lifestyle. They will work with individual women and also set up groups to discuss key issues and reduce isolation. Part of their work will be aimed at improving health workers' understanding of the needs of ethnic minority women and helping them to meet these needs with sympathy and knowledge.

The community health workers will be expected to feed back information to policy makers and planners as to what the problems are and suggest improvements.

The City and Hackney Community Health Council and Hackney Council for Racial Equality and the AHA are together responsible for the overall management of the project. Money has been allocated for three years.

NEW BUS-LINK

At last Kingsmead is to get some improvement in its bus service.

From 25 April, the S3 route will be diverted from Eastway along Lee Conservancy Road, Marsh Hill and Homerton High Street, before rejoining its present route at Morning Lane.

This will provide a new direct link into Stratford via Hackney Wick Station and to Stoke Newington via Mare Street and Amhurst Rd. The bus has a flat fare of 25p, and currently operates on Mondays to Saturdays only.

The diversion was suggested to the Borough Council by the Hackney Public Transport Action Committee in 1980. London Transport eventually took the idea on board as the bus should make an important contribution to local facilities.

MENTAL HEALTH SCANDAL

Following the recent scandal surrounding Rampton mental hospital, facts are beginning to emerge about appalling conditions and chronic understaffing in other institutions, including St. Lawrence's Hospital, Ceterham.

There are some 150 mentally handicapped adults from Hackney in St. Lawrence's, one of the biggest mental hospitals in the country. Its management team has described it in a recent report as "making Rampton look like a five-star hotel". The main problem is an acute shortage of nursing staff for the 1300 patients (165 nurses short), which means that no new patients have been admitted since 1978, basic nursing care cannot be ensured and many wards have to be locked at night, and occasionally during the day.

IMPROVEMENTS

This situation can only be improved by extra money which is simply not available. The hospital receives only £9.93 per inpatient a day, compared to £15.88 at Ely Hospital, which puts St. Lawrence's among the seven poorest hos-

pitals in Britain. (Ely Hospital receives an increase after the care there aroused much public concern.)

The City & Hackney Community Health Council (CHC), has been concerned for some time about the number of mentally handicapped people from Hackney in hospitals outside the district and believes as many as possible should be brought back to Hackney. Several have come from St. Lawrence's to the Social Services hostel in Salcombe Road (after spending some 30 years there) and have adjusted sufficiently to move into flats of their own. However, this process is very slow because of the shortage of hostel/group home places and individual flats.

If you are interested in helping the CHC campaign for more and better accommodation in Hackney for the mentally handicapped, please contact the CHC at:

Shoreditch Health Centre,
210 Kingsland Road,
Shoreditch, E2.
(tel. 739 6308)

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Tel : 254 6677

Weekly Programme

- Mon 2 Mar for 6 days KAGEMUSHA (A)
(Perfs: 5.10 & 8 pm + Sat 2.25 pm)
- Mon 9 - Sat 21 Mar STARDUST MEMORIES (AA) &
INTERIORS (AA)
(Perfs: 5.30 & 8.50 pm)
- Mon 23 Mar for 6 days THE CONFORMIST (X) &
THE SPIDER'S STRATAGEM (AA)
(Perfs: 5.15 & 8.50 pm)

Sunday Matinees

- Mar 1 at 3pm METROPOLIS (A) & NOSFERATU (AA)
- Mar 8 at 2.30pm THE CHINA SYNDROME (A) &
THE FRONT (AA)
- Mar 15 at 2.45pm BRINGING UP BABY (A) &
SYLVIA SCARLETT (A)
- Mar 22 at 3pm THE LADY VANISHES (A) &
THE 39 STEPS (A)
- Mar 29 at 2.30pm DORA (X) & A WOMAN UNDER THE
INFLUENCE (AA)

Friday and Saturday lates (all at 11.15pm)

- Fri 6 Mar DON'T LOOK NOW (X) & KLUTE (X)
- Sat 7 Mar THE CHINA SYNDROME (A) &
THE FRONT (AA)
- Fri 13 Mar DAY OF THE LOCUST (X) &
THE LAST TYCOON (AA)
- Sat 14 Mar THE PASSENGER (AA) &
NORTH BY NORTHWEST (A)
- Fri 20 Mar THE QUEEN OF OUTER SPACE (AA) &
ATTACK OF THE 50 FOOT WOMAN (AA)
- Sat 21 Mar THE LADY VANISHES (A) &
THE 39 STEPS (A)
- Fri 27 Mar PAT GARRETT AND BILLY THE
KID (X) & BLOW-UP (X)
- Sat 28 Mar CONVOY (X) & THE DRIVER (A)

HOXTON HALL THEATRE

128a HOXTON STREET, LONDON N1 (Tel: 739 5431)

MARCH EVENTS IN THE MUSIC HALL THEATRE

- * Fri 6 - Sat 7..... Three Chekov Plays: 'The Bear',
'The Proposal' & 'The Jubilee' -
performed by Hoxton Hall Theatre
Project.
- * Fri 13..... 'A Winter's Tale', by William
Shakespeare - performed by 'On
The Road Theatre Company'.
- * Fri 20 - Sat 21..... 'The Bracelet', devised and per-
formed by Hoxton Drama Group.
- * Wed 25 (1.30 pm)..... Bloomers Theatre Company.
- * Thu 26 - Fri 27..... Hoxton Writers' Festival - per-
formances of plays written by
local people.
- * Sat 28..... The Lazy Lizards- local rock
group.

Events begin at 8pm (unless otherwise stated)

Prices: £1 (concessions for OAPs & unwaged)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, TEL. 739 5431.

MPs back O'Hara inquiry call

Over 30 MPs of all parties have now signed an Early Day Motion expressing serious concern at the refusal of the Home Office to answer Stanley Clinton Davis' questions concerning the treatment of Matthew O'Hara in Pentonville Prison last March. They are calling for the release of the full text of reports made by the prison authorities and the Royal Northern Hospital and a full and independent inquiry into the relationship between Matthew's prison treatment and his subsequent death.

Matthew, a diabetic, was sentenced to seven days' imprisonment for contempt of court on March 12 last year, but four days later was rushed to hospital in a coma due to not having received the insulin on which his life depended. According to hospital records, he had apparently been coughing blood for 36 hours in the prison.

Clinton Davis, Matthew's MP, used the opportunity of the debate on the Freedom of Information Bill, introduced on February 6, but lost because of government opposi-

tion, to accuse Lord Belstead, Junior Home Office Minister for Prisons, of being "less than frank" about what happened in Pentonville.

FURTIVE

Arguing that a Freedom of Information Bill was necessary to force Ministers to tell the public what goes on, Clinton Davis said: "The Minister refuses to disclose to me what occurred in the prison and what information was given. That is absolutely wrong. When allegations are made about prison treatment, generally speaking a furtive atmosphere prevails... I am deeply concerned about what happened in those four days. I cannot find out. I am not told by the Minister what occurred. I have asked him 38 highly relevant questions in what I believe to be a contemptuous letter, he tells me that he is not prepared to answer them. Why not? I am not an irresponsible Member of Parliament." "What can we do?" asked another MP. "The establish-

ment stops an Hon Member from taking action unless he makes an attempt to get Mr Speaker to name him or create a disturbance."

"I have no intention of so endangering the rules of order that I will be thrown out," Clinton Davis replied. "I am entitled to pursue a constituent's case... to ask what steps were taken to investigate the case. What medical confidentiality prevents (Lord Belstead) from disclosing basic facts about what was said to prison warders? What was said to doctors? What records were kept? To all those questions, I simply get the brush-off. Any Hon Member would feel grossly dissatisfied with a derisory, contemptuous and complacent reply, as I have received from Lord Belstead in a number of letters."

"I believe that this case is not isolated... something is radically wrong with the prison service in this respect; it seems to feel it has a duty not to reveal information to the public. That cannot be right in a free society."

Hackney CND diary

Monday 2 March: HCND Business Meeting at 8 pm in Dalston Library, Dalston Lane, E8.

Saturday 7 March: HCND Day School. For HCND members to seriously discuss current disarmament issues and to meet HCND members. For location and other details please write to the address below.

Monday 16 March: Special Open Meeting. This is to involve all old and new members who haven't come to the other business meetings. This campaign can't survive without the active support of every member. All are welcome. Time and place to be announced later. For details, write to the address below.

Wednesday 15 April: Free Showing of The War Game at Hackney Town Hall, Mare Street at 8 pm in the Assembly Hall.

Saturday 25 April: Peace Fayre. Our largest event so far. 1-5 pm, at Hackney Town Hall, Mare Street, in the Assembly Hall. An exciting event designed to inform and to entertain, with many local groups taking part. There will be exhibitions, slide show, entertainments and refreshments. We need help to make this important event a success. In the evening (8-11.30), there will be live bands. If you can help, write to the address below, marking your envelope "Peace Fayre". We need you!

Wednesday 29 April: Public Meeting with Bruce Kent. Bruce Kent from National CND will be speaking to us on Nuclear Disarmament, at 8 pm in Hackney Town Hall, Assembly Hall.

Wednesday 13 May: Free Showing of The Bomb, made by Jonathan Dimbleby - as startling as The War Game. Time and location to be announced later.

At all these events there will be a bookstall set up with books, pamphlets, posters and badges. For further details and information, please write to Hackney Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, PO Box 27, 136 Kingsland High St, E8. (Donations are very gratefully received!)

HCND Membership Form

I wish to become a member of the Hackney Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and enclose cheque/PO for 50p

Name

Address.....

Tel no

I wish to further help HCND by donating £.....
Please return to Membership Secretary (R Smith),
108 Dalston Lane, E8.

HACKNEY PEOPLE'S PRESS

HACKNEY PEOPLE'S PRESS holds regular meetings on Mondays at 8pm in our office at 85 Dalston Lane, E8. If you would like to find out more about us - or volunteer to help write, produce or sell the next issue - then please come along. Meetings in March will be on 2nd, 9th and 16th. If you can't come, then ring 249 8191 (messages in day time) or 249 0311 (evenings & weekends).

HACKNEY PEOPLE'S PRESS is an alternative non-profit making monthly newspaper produced by an open group of people who live or work in Hackney. We publish the paper because we believe that Hackney needs an alternative to the commercial press to serve the real interests of its people. We have no editor and no shareholders and no one is paid by the paper.

HPP is your newspaper: anyone who lives or works in Hackney is welcome to come and help us. All decisions are made collectively.

HPP is sold through various newsagents and shops throughout Hackney. If you think that your newsagent would like to sell it, on sale or return, then please contact us. And if you don't think that you can spare the time to become more fully involved, but you enjoy reading HPP and think more people should read it, then please get in touch if you are willing to sell a few copies to your friends or neighbours or at meetings.

FIGHT-BACK FUND

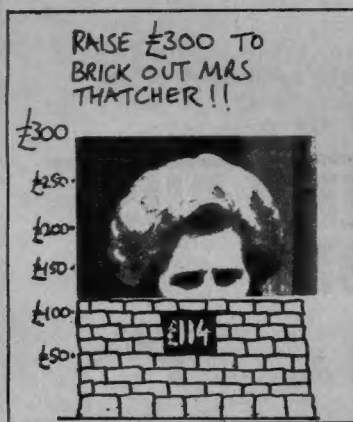
HPP's Fight Back Fund had an encouraging start during February reaching a total of £114 by the time this issue went to press.

The bulk of this, £75, was raised by the well-attended benefit we held at Chats Palace on 20 February. Many thanks to all who came, and to the C Sharps and the Flats for playing. Many thanks also to individuals who've donated money, even the councillor who called himself a "reactionary puppet of government policy".

However, despite this generosity, we are still in great need of further support urgently. Our target is £300, so we're only about one-third of the way there.

If HPP is to survive, then

we must get to our £300 target by the end of March. Please rush your donations in now!



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